

Exploring Our Forests:

What's that in your backpack?

Are you carrying a forest on your back? Of course not! But if you dig through your backpack, you will find many things that come from the forest. You might have paper, books, and pencils—all from the forest.

Let's explore some of these things and see how they get from the woods to your backpack.



Let's start with the paper . . .

Papermaking begins in the forest. Trees are marked to be cut down. Once the trees are cut, the biggest branches are removed. The logs, as the trunks are now called, are stacked in huge piles at the edge of the

forest. A logging truck takes them to the paper mill, a factory that makes paper.

At the mill, the logs go through many steps to be made into paper. After the bark is taken off, the wood is cut into little pieces.

***From the forest . . .
to the factory . . .
to your desk!***



Then it is cooked in a big pot. This turns the wood into a mushy pulp. Next, the pulp is washed, turned white, and drained. Then it is sprayed onto big screens to dry. The finished sheets of paper are put onto giant rolls. Some of these rolls of paper weigh as much as 50,000 pounds! Finally, the paper is lined and cut into pieces for people to use. Some of it is made into the books and magazines you read everyday.

Let's check that backpack again . . .

Your pencils come from the forest, too. They are made from the wood of a cedar (SEE-der) tree. At the

pencil factory, cedar logs are sawed into chunky blocks, then sliced thin to make flat slats. Next, narrow grooves are cut into the slats to hold the graphite (GRA-fite), the “lead” part you write with. After the graphite is set in place, two slats are glued together, sandwiching the graphite inside. Then the pencils are cut and painted. Finally, the eraser is added.

Paper. Books. Pencils. Your backpack is full. Can you believe that so many things you carry around every day come from forests?



Adapted from an article by Mona Pease